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Van Hollen: Grand Bargain on Deficit Still Possible

By Corey Boles



Associated Press

Rep. Chris Van Hollen (D., Md.) the ranking Democrat on the House Budget Committee, at a hearing Feb. 21, 2013, on Capitol Hill in Washington. (AP Photo/Jacquelyn Martin)

Despite drastically different visions spelled out in dueling budgets being released this week, a top House Democrat said a “grand bargain” to reduce the deficit remains possible.

Rep. **Chris Van Hollen** (D., Md.) said he sees a narrow window that will remain open until August or September for the parties to reach agreement on a deal to reduce federal budget deficits in the coming years.

Mr. Van Hollen, the top Democrat on the House Budget Committee, said that the House Republican budget released Tuesday “shows that the gulf we have to bridge is just as big as it ever was.”

“This document shows no sign of compromise, it doesn’t budge one inch, it doesn’t budge a quarter inch,” Mr. Van Hollen said at a press briefing Tuesday.

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He said that while he rejects most of the proposals outlined in [the House GOP budget](#) drawn up by Budget Committee Chairman **Paul Ryan** (R., Wis.), it doesn’t derail a renewed effort to reach a broad deficit deal.

“I think we have a window of opportunity between now and around August to September,” the lawmaker said. “As far as I know, Republicans have maintained their threat to default on our debts and obligations if there is not additional deficit reduction.

“This is an opportunity, it seems to me, to try and resolve those issues.”

The GOP budget would balance the federal budget in a decade by overhauling the Medicaid and Medicare programs. A Senate Democratic budget set to be unveiled Wednesday won’t seek to balance the budget, but rather stabilize government borrowing as a percentage of GDP.

Mr. Van Hollen said that House Democrats were working on their own version of a budget, that would largely track the Senate Democratic blueprint.

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